PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

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Abstract

The paper addresses historical approaches to Islamic theological studies and discusses new initiatives that inspire Islamic practical theology. The author argues that there is a need for practical theology in Islamic studies. The question is how practical Islamic theological studies may help Muslim religious leaders and clergy connect their theological understanding to the everyday experience of Muslims in the community, society, and the world. The second question in this paper relates to the daily life practices of our faith and tradition: "How do daily life practices gain an 'epistemic weight' in the production of new knowledge in practical Islamic theology, where Islamic doctrine, tradition, philosophy, and the 'living human document' hold a central position?"

Key Words: Practical theology, pastoral theology, Islamic theology, hermeneutical approach, religious education

Introduction

During more than ten years as a researcher and spiritual care provider in a health care setting, I have become aware that there is an enormous gap between the academic and practical paradigms in Islamic theological studies. In other words, Islamic theological studies are more subject-oriented and lack the practical aspects of the Islamic faith lived by Muslims with the exclusion of Islamic jurisprudence.

This leads to significant misunderstandings and incorrect perceptions in academia about real life problems, and as a result, "academic solutions" do not work well in practical situations to which Islamic theological studies should respond. However, if we take into consideration the fact that theological knowledge depends on the context and is sensitive in many ways, there is a need for an understanding of the "lived" practice of Islamic theological studies or a greater need for practical theology in Islamic studies to enable both academics and practitioners of the Islamic faith to address issues of power, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism among Muslims. We need to develop a new perspective in Islamic theological studies that reflects the lived experience of Muslims, and we also need to provide tools to put Islamic theological concepts into practice.

Although there are few data available indicating the religious makeup of faculties of Islamic theological studies (i.e., the percentage of Muslims vs. non-Muslims), I argue that these faculties fail to initiate creative resources in order to produce religious leaders that meet the psychosocial needs of the Muslim community. Most of these faculties tend to discuss practical aspects of the Islamic faith in abstract ways. One remedy to correct the condition of Islamic practical theological studies is the introduction of new approaches in practical theology in the Islamic context, which can be defined as a conversation between the lived experience and the Islamic faith and as an attempt to engage Islam both empirically and hermeneutically.

Currently, we do not have a specific and well-defined understanding of practical theology in Islamic theological studies. However, I argue that practical theology offers new opportunities for Islamic professions, such as Islamic spiritual care and counseling, and is an important addition to Islamic theological studies because the empirical aspects of practical theology allow the application of theological disciplines and humanities and the social sciences. I argue that practical theology promises new avenues to make Islamic theological studies move away from a narrow and rigid academic discipline to an increasingly vivid interdisciplinary and action-oriented field. Furthermore, practical theology will offer qualitative approaches that reflect various philosophical assumptions, world views, and theoretical lenses.[1] In this sense, practical theology promises more cultural

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[1]   John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (2nd edn., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 4.

transformations of Islam within Islamic cultures. I do not argue, however, that academic discussions of Islamic faith, which depend on the complex web of abstract theories, neglect the real life issues in any way. What I do argue is that we need practical theology in Islamic studies in order to make academic discussions relevant to the daily practice of the Islamic faith. We need to know how to design practical theology in Islamic theological studies so that it may act as a bridge between academia and all areas of life in which we observe and practice Islamic doctrine and in which we find meaning in the observance of this lived doctrine. As explained by Bonnie Miller-McLemore, E. Rhodes, and Leona B. Carpenter, Professor of Pastoral Theology and head of the International Academy of Practical Theology, a practical knowledge of theology should not only emerge from personal or social experience but also be born from a living "tradition (e.g., worship)," "scripture (e.g., lectiodivina)," and "reason."[2] Currently, in Islamic tradition, it is generally accepted that production of knowledge must be based on the integration of theory, practice, and spirituality (*al-ʿaql, al-jasad*, and *al-rūḥ*).

Practical theology in Islamic theological studies needs to be established and cherished because "practical theological knowledge is still our expert subject matter, worthy of greater study and status than it has been accorded, just as scripture is the expertise of a biblical scholar or tradition the expertise of the religious historian regardless of where they ground their constructive work."[3]

The first part of this paper addresses historical approaches to Islamic theological studies. Then, we move to a discussion of the new initiatives that inspire Islamic practical theology and the need for practical theology in Islamic studies. The question is how practical Islamic theological studies may help Muslim religious leaders and clergy connect their theological understanding to the everyday experience of Muslims in the community, society, and the world. The second question in this paper relates to the daily life practice of Islamic faith and tradition: "How do daily life practices gain an 'epistemic weight' in the production of new knowledge in practical Islamic theology, where Islamic doctrine, tradition, and the 'living human document' hold a central position?"

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[2]   Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Toward Greater Understanding of Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16/1 (2012), 108.

[3]   Ibid., 108.

A Historical Approach to Islamic Studies

Many Muslim scholars have devoted their writings to exploring the past and contemporary conditions of Islamic theological studies.[4] Although most of these authors[5] have concentrated on how to integrate the Islamic worldview into social and behavioral sciences, their works have contributed to the reformation of Islamic theological studies in Muslim countries.

Due to the lack of practical vision and mission in Islamic studies, many Muslim thinkers took the initiative to present an example for

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[4]   Muhammad Hamid al-Afendi and Nabi Ahmed Baloch (eds.), *Curriculum and Teacher Education* (Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1980); Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1962); Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Nimat Hafez Barazangi, *Woman's Identity and the Qur'ān: A New Reading* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2004); Munir D. Ahmad, "Muslim Education Prior to the Establishment of *Madrasah,*" *Islamic Studies* 26/4 (1987), 321-348; Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī, "Islamizing the Social Sciences," in Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī and Abdullah Omar Nasseef (eds.), *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspectives* (Sevenoaks, Kent-UK: Hodder and Stoughton & Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1981); Sayyid Waqqar Ahmed Husaini, "Humanistic-Social Sciences Studies in Higher Education: Islamic and International Perspectives," in Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī and Abdullah Omar Nasseef (eds.), *Social and Natural Sciences: The Islamic Perspectives*; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The Teaching of Philosophy," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Philosophy, Literature, and Fine Arts* (Sevenoaks, Kent-UK: Hodder and Stoughton & Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1982); Salah Hussein Al-Abidi, "The Mosque: Adult Education and Uninterrupted Learning," *Al-Islām al-Yawm/Islam Today* 7/7 (1989), 68-77.

[5]   Taha Jabir al-Alwani, "The Islamization of Methodology of Behavioral Sciences," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 6/2 (1989), 227-238; M. Umer Chapra, *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective* (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 2000); Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Washington, D.C.: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982); Mehdi Golshani, "How to Make Sense of Islamic Science?," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 17/3 (2000), 1-21; Sayyid Abū l-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *Role of Academic Research in an Age of Civilizational Struggle* (Karachi: n.p., 2000); Fazlur Rahman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Response," *American Journal of Social Sciences* 5/1 (1988), 3-11; Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islām and Secularism* (2nd edn., Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization [ISTAC], 1993).

Islamic theological studies. For example, Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī[6] initiated the 'Islamization of Knowledge,' which provoked Fazlur Rahman's[7] response to the dilemma. The process of so-called 'Islamization of Knowledge' began to evolve with the First World Conference on Muslim Education in Mecca/Saudi Arabia in 1977 and became more prominent in the 1980s. Eventually, the two main camps of Muslim intellectuals emerged: the traditional Muslim scholars who argued that all knowledge, including science, must be based on *naqlī* tradition and rejected science that did not conform with the main sources of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, and the secularist-modernist scholars, who supported the role of ʿ*aql* (human reason) in the evolution of Islamic studies and the neutrality of science. In addition to these two camps, the emerging postmodernist camp of Muslims scholars argues that Muslims need "to create their own science by incorporating what is positive in modern science into a world view where God reigns supreme …"[8] Such developments in the process of the "Islamization" of knowledge encouraged the recognition of the importance of the integration of theory, practice, and spirituality (*al-ʿaql, al-jasad*, and *al-rūḥ*).[9]

According to Gregory Starrett,[10] reformist changes in educational systems not only transformed the practical approaches to Islamic education but also transformed ideological perspectives about religion and religious education. For example, some Muslim countries have striven to integrate Islamic education into the social and behavioral sciences to enable the younger generations to achieve cultural knowledge about their heritage. Nevertheless, there was no clear distinction between the 'religious' teachings and Islamic higher learning.[11] In addition, the Islamic education (*madrasa*) system was reserved for the poor and underprivileged, while secular education was established for rich and middle class students. In some Muslim countries, the subject of Islam was removed from the curriculum as a mandatory subject and later on, was reintroduced as an optional sub-

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[6]   Al-Fārūqī, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan.*
[7]   Rahman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A Response."
[8]   Nasr, "Islam and the Problem of Modern Science," *MAAS Journal of Islamic Science* 4/1 (1988), 45-57.
[9]   See "Fathoming IOK, An Interview with Dr. Ibrahim Zein," *IIITM Letter* 19 (1998).
[10] Gregory Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics, and Religious Transformation in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
[11] Barazangi, *Woman's Identity*, 11-13.

ject under the general name of 'religion' insead of ethics and character development. As a result, the field of Islamic studies was left to the realm of passive Sufi orders and the *madrasa* system.

In contrast, in some Muslim countries, such as Turkey and Egypt, state-centralized schooling, (in the past controlled by missionaries or privately funded institutions) used a secular approach to education on *tarbiya* (upbringing, nurture, teaching) that acquired a new meaning: it implied the skills and information required for a job.[12] In Turkey, for example, Islamic schools were completely under state control in the 1930s. For a brief period in 1933, the Turkish government even banned Islamic education, including theological education at the universities. Ultimately, however, the Turkish government reopened the faculties of theology in Istanbul and Ankara. The primary focus of these faculties was to train religious leaders for official state duty. Both the state and privately run Islamic theological faculties failed to incorporate the essential subjects of Islamic studies that were once taught in pre-colonial Islamic centers, where the primary education curricula concentrated on Qurʾānic *talqīn* (acquisition and dissemination of meaning and spirit), *akhbār* (history), *ḥisāb* (simple arithmetic and reckoning), elementary Arabic *naḥw* (grammar), reading, and writing, *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān* (Qurʾānic sciences), *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth* (sciences of the Prophetic tradition), and their ancillary sciences of Arabic *naḥw*, *ādāb* (literature), and *ḥikma*. In some Muslim countries, religious education differed from Islamic education and vice versa. For example, in Malaysia and Turkey, the state ensures that compulsory Islamic worldview courses are taught to all students in elementary and high schools. In general, Islamic education became more dependent on *naqlī* knowledge (acquired knowledge based on the 'religious sources,' especially the Qurʾān and the prophetic tradition) and lacked lessons on *ʿaqlī* knowledge (acquired by human efforts); thus, religious education transformed Qurʾānic principles into formalized legal and moral codes and rituals, creating a dichotomy in Islamic thinking.[13]

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[12]   *Ibid.*, 12.

[13]   Barazangi, Nimat Hafez, "Education: Religious Education," *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Islamic World,* Oxford Islamic Studies Online, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0212#e0212-s1 (accessed December 28, 2014).

As a result of these secular interventions, Islamic theological education was deprived of its intellectual value.[14] There were some exceptions, however: in some private Islamic institutions in South Asia, i.e., Darul Uloom Deoband in India and Darul Uloom in Pakistan, religious centers produced very knowledgeable and competent religious leaders through their graduate and postgraduate specialization courses (*takmīl*) in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the study of Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), and Islamic classical theology (*kalām*). Some programs in these centers required more than eight years of study. Nevertheless, in general, none of the Islamic theological faculties, whether state or informal, represented proper educational reform.[15] This was especially evident in the area of women's education in Islamic studies and proper methodological approaches to Islamic studies. Barazangi and Nasr[16] explain this lack of perspectives and approaches with the confusion of *taḥfīẓ* (oral and aural transmission), which often became confused with *talqīn* (the acquisition and dissemination of Qurʾānic principles and spirit). If, historically, the *talqīn* principle in Islamic institutions led to the production of many 'philosopher-scientists' in various intellectual disciplines, later on, its replacement with *taḥfīẓ* led to religious indoctrination. As Barazangi complains, Islamic education was therefore limited to the traditional method of reciting the Qurʾān instead of teaching the Qurʾān as the foundation of all knowledge in Islamic studies.[17] Ali A. Mazrui[18] explains this by citing the impact of the English colonial system in the Middle East and the French colonial system in North and West Africa, Syria, and Lebanon every area of life.

Furthermore, ideological influences and sectarianism in Islamic schools mobilized students to stand up for their own 'true' version of Islam. Such sectarianism produced intolerance toward dissenting fellow Muslims and non-Muslims and ultimately fed into political extremism. The root cause for such polarization, however, was the political manipulation of these schools by some Islamic politicians and militants. It has also been noted that, conversely, some radical and ideological groups sought to open their own schools. One ex-

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14   Ibid.
15   Barazangi, *Woman's Identity*, 14.
16   Nasr, "The Teaching of Philosophy," 3-21.
17   Barazangi, "Religious Education."
18   See Ali A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Boston & Toronto: Little Brown, 1986).

ample is Jāmiʿat al-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya in Karachi, which is committed to the group's ideology.

Practical Theology in Islamic Theological Studies

Despite the efforts to produce new methodologies in Islamic studies, Islamic theological studies still lack appropriate perspectives and methodologies. This gap is especially felt with the emergence of new professions such as Islamic spiritual care and Islamic counseling, to name a few. Nevertheless, some contemporary Muslim writers reflect on research in Islamic theology that focuses particularly on field research activities. For example, Mohamed Ajouaou,[19]Amjad Hussain,[20] Nazila Isgandarova,[21] Thomas O'Connor,[22] Sophie Gilliat-Ray,[23] M.

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[19] Mohamed Ajouaou, *Imam Behind Bars: A Case Study of Islamic Spiritual Care in Dutch Prisons towards the Development of a Professional Profile* (North Charleston: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2014); id., *Wie is moslim? Geloof en secularisatie onder westerse moslims* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2014).

[20] Amjad Hussain, "Muslim Theology and Religious Studies: Relational, Practical, and Inter-Faith Dimensions," *Religious Education* 104/3 (2009), 239-242.

[21] Nazila Isgandarova, "The Crescent of Compassionate Engagement: Theory and Practice of Islamic Spiritual Care," in Daniel S. Schipani (ed.), *Multifaith Views in Spiritual Care* (Waterloo: Pandora Press, Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counseling, 2013), 109-130; id., "Muslim Spiritual Care and Counselling," in T. O'Connor, E. Meakes, and C. Lashmar (eds.), *The Spiritual Care Givers Guide to Identity, Practice and Relationships: Transforming the Honeymoon in Spiritual Care and Therapy* (Waterloo: WLU Press, 2008), 235-256; id., "Islamic Spiritual Care in a Health Care Setting," in A. Meier, T. O'Connor, and P. Van Katwyk (eds.), *Spirituality and Health: Multidisciplinary Explorations* (Waterloo: WLU Press, 2005), 85-104; id., "The Evolution of Islamic Spiritual Care and Counseling in Ontario in the Context of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario," *Journal of Psychology & Psychotherapy* 4/3 (2014), 1-6; id., "Rape as a Tool against Women in War: The Role of Spiritual Caregivers to Support the Survivors of an Ethnic Violence," *Cross Currents* 63/2 (2013), 174-184; id., "Effectiveness of Islamic Spiritual Care: Foundations and Practices of Muslim Spiritual Care Givers," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 66/3 (2012), 1-16.

[22] Nazila Isgandarova and Thomas St. James O'Connor, "A Redefinition and Model of Canadian Islamic Spiritual Care," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 66/2 (2012), 1-8.

[23] Sophie Gilliat-Ray, "Body-Works and Fieldwork: Research with British Muslim Chaplains," *Culture and Religion* 11/4 (2010), 413-432.

Mansur Ali, and Stephen Pattison[24] engage Islamic professional work based on practical theology and social sciences. Nazila Isgandarova, for example, argues that religious studies in many Islamic institutions usually concentrate on memorization of the sacred texts, *ḥadīth*s, and *fatwā*s (juridical pronouncements) and exclude social sciences from their curricula. She states that the lack of a social sciences component in the religious training of Muslim spiritual caregivers contributes to the limited understanding of Islamic professions and makes their practice less than satisfactory.[25] Sophie Gilliat-Ray, M. Mansur Ali, and Stephen Pattison[26] present one of the most in-depth studies of contemporary chaplaincy in the United Kingdom and argue that due to the changing role of religion under the impact of political, social, and religious dynamics, the practice of Muslim chaplaincy has also changed to meet the needs and rights of Muslims. This type of employment of the practical aspects of Islamic tradition produces positive contributions by Muslim chaplains in public spaces and intra-faith dialog. Nevertheless, the authors use more traditional terms, such as "chaplain," to describe Islamic spiritual care and do not provide information about the importance of social sciences in Islamic spiritual care. They mainly concentrate on the "advisory" role of Muslim chaplains in public institutions rather than their roles as counselors and therapists to Muslim clients. Nevertheless, the book produces an outstanding reflection on practical aspects of Islamic theological studies and gender relations within and outside Muslim communities.

In addition to research and scholarly activities, educational centers in some Muslim countries, such as Turkey, have introduced new initiatives to bridge the gap in the above-mentioned areas. These initiatives are more practical approaches to Islamic theological studies and educational goals in order to integrate the lived experience of faith with theological education. On the one hand, the supporters of new initiatives acknowledged that theology has played an important role in defining and leading the culture. On the other hand, due to societal pressures, they developed an interdisciplinary approach to the study of theology by integrating practical, exegetical, and historical disciplines so that academic work may respond to the radical social

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[24] Sophie Gilliat-Ray, M. Mansur Ali, and Stephen Pattison, *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

[25] Isgandarova, "The Evolution of Islamic Spiritual Care," 143.

[26] See Gilliat-Ray et al., *ibid.*, 5.

changes, making academic theories relevant to everyday life. Theological departments have reformed theological studies by reintegrating the lived experience and the various branches of theology. Due to these innovations, in Turkish theological departments (such as Ankara and Marmara Universities), the curricula now include subjects such as Religious Education, Religious and Spiritual Care, Turkish-Religious Music, Fine Arts/*Tadhhīb* (Illumination), *Khaṭṭ* (Calligraphy), Methodology in Social Sciences, Psychology of Religion, Social Psychology, and Social Work Practices.[27] The primary goal is to produce religious leaders who are able to promote the intellectual and moral development of the society and who are able to function within and respond to the needs of modern societies. In Malaysia, since 1983, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) has been successful in integrating Islamic values with modern fields of knowledge in the fields of early childhood and primary education, Islamic economics, finance, banking, and insurance. This process must be spread to the field of Islamic practical theology.

Islamic departments in some European universities have also begun to offer practical theology courses. At the Free University Amsterdam, the Islamic Practical Theology course aims to provide a basic knowledge of practical Islamic theology, especially in the fields of the imamate, spiritual care, and religious education. The purpose of the course is to improve the reflection and theorizing on the practice of religious Islamic faith activities. The Islamic chaplaincy program at Hartford Seminary and Rotterdam Islamic University, as well as the MTS program in Islamic studies at Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto, offers courses that aim to integrate the practical and academic aspects of Islamic theology.

These changes in Islamic theological studies reflect two main aspects of theology: (1) the 'experiential-expressive' and (2) the 'cognitive-propositional.'[28] This allows us to view doctrine as a cultural lin-

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[27]   For a detailed dscription of these programs see, "İlahiyat Dersleri", http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=429 (accessed December 05, 2014), "Lisans programları", http://llp.marmara.edu.tr/organizasyon.aspx?kultur=tr-TR&Mod=1&ustbirim=1400&birim=1401&altbirim=-1&program=69&organizasyonId=86&mufredatTurId=932001, (accessed December 05, 2014).

[28]   George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984), 16.

guistic construct and to fit theology into its context.[29] Nevertheless, it is too early to argue that we have achieved our goal and established contemporary Islamic practical theology studies. The kind of notion offered by Lindbeck is still missing in many Islamic practical theological studies because the terms used in Islamic theory are highly philosophical. In other words, there is a gap between the lived and the studied. However, there is some light at the end of the tunnel: because many of those who study Islam are also practicing Muslims, they have a tremendous amount of energy and knowledge to enrich our practice with academic theories, as well as to enhance their academic theories with our experience (using terms that are inherent to the Islamic tradition). This is a 'promised land' for Islamic theological studies, which I will call practical theology.

How Can We Improve Islamic Practical Theology?

As understood from its name, practical theology is a subdivision of theology that focuses on practice; in general, it is a practice-oriented theology. The practical theologian uses his/her practice as a source of new knowledge. Although theory plays an important role in this process, it comes second to practice because it is more than a dogma-based interpretation of the Islamic faith. Nevertheless, Islamic practical theology is not easy to define: there are multiple positions and definitions that capture the true meaning of practical theology.

In Christian theology, the main understanding of pastoral theology is usually based on Friedrich Schleiermacher's understanding of theology, which suggests understanding, reflecting on, and interpreting Christian practice.[30] As a branch of pastoral theology, practical theology "is a place where religious belief, tradition, and practice meet contemporary experiences, questions, and actions and conduct a dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical and practi-

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[29] Pete Ward, "Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church," *Reviews in Religion & Theology* 17/1 (2010), 55-59.

[30] Wilhelm Gräb, "Practical Theology as a Religious and Cultural Hermeneutics of Christian Practice: An enthusiastic support of Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore's corrections of the Five Misunderstandings of Practical Theology based on Schleiermacher's Concept of Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16/1 (2012), 79-92.

cally transforming."[31] According to pastoral theologian Elaine Graham, pastoral theology is "the systematic reflection upon the nature of the Church in the world, accessible only through the practical wisdom of those very communities. Therefore, as a discipline, pastoral theology is not legislative or prescriptive, but interpretive. It enables the community of faith to give a critical and public account of its purposeful presence in the world, and the values that give shape to its actions."[32] Thus, practical theology is "more than descriptive and empirical" and holds the potential to be "transformative and transcendent," moving beyond the *normative* (e.g., ethics and prescription).[33] What makes it different from theologies? Practical theology is "a general way of doing theology concerned with the embodiment of religious belief in the day-to-day lives of individuals and communities"[34] that moves beyond the Scripture and religious texts.

There are many who argue that any discussion of practical theology should be based on methodology that offers a better chance of capturing the lived experience. For example, in his article on the "hermeneutics of religion," Philipp Stoellger argues that in this discussion, the new of role of religion should be defined first. The preconceived general terms do not offer a complete picture of religion: religion should be engaged in terms of its phenomenological aspects.[35] Nevertheless, he does not entertain the possibility of using empirical research nor does he discuss how the content of religion should be studied.[36]

According to Rudolf Bultmann, practical theology must engage both empirical and religious-hermeneutical methods in order to respond to socio-cultural religious transformations and capture the pre-understandings and self-understandings of religious people that are

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[31]   Stephen Pattison and James Woodward, "An Introduction to Pastoral and Practical Theology," in James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 126.

[32]   Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 208-209.

[33]   Miller-McLemore, "Toward Greater Understanding of Practical Theology," 111.

[34]   Ibid., 111.

[35]   Philipp Stoellger, "Vom Nichtverstehen aus. Abgründe und Anfangsgründe einer Hermeneutik der Religion," in Ingolf U. Dalferth and Philipp Stoellger (eds.), *Hermeneutik der Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 59-90.

[36]   Gräb, ibid., 79.

constructed through empirical, religious-hermeneutical procedures.[37] Gräb supports Bultmann's claim and states that practical theology should integrate empirical methods with hermeneutical methodology to engage the lived experience and exegetical, systematic, and historical theological disciplines. He mentions that such empirical research in practical theology can only be developed when it defines "a formal-functional concept of religion based in positive religions" in order to include cultural practices and discourses. This will demonstrate that believers can relate to their faith beyond any formal religious institution (i.e., church, mosque, synagogue, and temple) and hold on to their religious view of life and the world. In this regard, Gräb agrees with the arguments of sociologist Armin Nassehi, which state that religious organizations play a small role in developing the religious worldview: it is individuals who construct the meanings of their experiences, and these experiences either confirm or reject mainstream dogmatic religious world views. Nassehi argues that this is the authentic self-representation of individuality and does not necessarily need to accord with formal religious views.[38]

Gräb suggests that practical theology should offer a "discursively open and formal-functional understanding of religion."[39] Otherwise, it cannot offer an empirical interpretation of religion and culture. Sallie McFague also argues that "it is necessary for the conversation of our time within the church, within the academy, and within the world to include as primary partners, setting the agenda and not merely 'adding to it,' the voices that have hitherto been excluded. From very different embodied sites will emerge radically different agendas, agendas which will be for the benefit of a different and more inclusive community than those presently in positions of power in the church, the academy or the world."[40]

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[37]   Rudolf Bultmann, "Das Problem der Hermeneutik," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 47/1 (1950), 47-69.

[38]   Armin Nassehi, "Religiöse Kommunikation: Religionssoziologische Konsequenzen einer qualitativen Untersuchung," in Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Woran glaubt die Welt? Analysen und Kommentare zum Religionsmonitor* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 169-204, quoted by Gräb, 84.

[39]   Ibid., 82.

[40]   Sallie McFague, "The Theologian as Advocate," in Sarah Coakley and David A. Pail (eds.), *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 155.

In these terms, practical theologians try to create a bridge between theory and practice, which is not the main aim of other branches of Islamic studies. In Islamic practical theology, hermeneutical methodology is still a widely used tool. As Miller-McLemore argues, however, strict binaries between "ecclesial conversation" and "secularized academy" do not help and instead deepen power struggles between "secular" and "religious." Therefore, practical theology in Islamic studies should provide students with more contemporary and diverse postmodern empirical methods so that they can engage Islamic theological studies and capture lived religious practices and experiences. For example, if practical methodology provides the perspective of the writer in terms of how she/he reads the Islamic tradition and makes sense of various practices and experiences, the empirical approach promises to make more sense of these rituals and practices from the experience of the people. Therefore, its aim is not teaching and preaching but describing the phenomenon in question and capturing human lived experience. Such an integrated approach allows the practical theology student and researcher to benefit from a rich tradition of interdisciplinary empirical methods: on the one hand, he/she uses hermeneutical methodology and depends on the Scripture and other text-based sources; on the other hand, she/he applies observation skills or perception to test the quality and trustworthiness of the experience.

Why Practical Theology in Islamic Studies?

Islamic practical theology is undergoing a transformation due to the wide-ranging conflicts and contradictions in a lived situation that question the role and function of Islamic tradition. Such contradictions invite us to examine and reformulate the role of the Islamic tradition and find new methodologies to embrace the challenge. As Bonnie Miller-McLemore notes regarding the importance of creative work on theological knowledge in the Christian tradition,[41] practical theology in Islamic theological studies must grapple with how theories about Islam are enacted in the lived experience of the Islamic faith.

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[41] Miller-McLemore, "Five Misunderstandings about Practical Theology," and "Toward Greater Understanding of Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 16/1 (2012), 5-26, 104-123.

One Muslim thinker, Barazangi, advocates for both traditional and modernizing approaches and methods to transfer religious knowledge, practice, and faith.[42] Her suggestions sound compatible with the methodologies used in practical theology that are both descriptive and critical.[43] In this sense, it is both a theology of 'theory' and a theology of 'practice.' The revisionist approach to Islamic theology (Islamic feminist theology) has already established a model for such a practice. Islamic feminist scholars have not only examined Islamic studies as an academic discipline but have also aimed to transform the community by bringing the voices of Muslim women into Islamic prayers and rituals. The post-colonial examination of colonialism in the Muslim world has also inspired freedom against imperialist forces.

The empirical principle of practical theology made a significant contribution to the reconstruction process of Christian tradition.[44] Such an empirical approach to theology should be used to reconstruct Islamic practical theology in order to give voice to the marginalized *umma*: the battered women, ethnic and religious minorities, the LGBTQ community, the poor, and so on, rather than to authority so that they can contribute their insights and understandings. According to Elaine L. Graham, listening to the voices of women is necessary if we want to achieve greater justice in our actions.[45] The result would be the emergence of more critical Muslim spiritual caregivers and clergy who are ready to move beyond the religious and theological norm. In addition, Islamic practical theology will break taboos of silence in Muslim communities that have prevented us from paying attention to issues regarding abusive, harmful and oppressive practices. Although I have not articulated or provided evidence for new methodologies in Islamic practical theology, these emerging method-

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[42] Dietrich Reetz and Joseph S. Szyliowicz, "Education: Educational Methods," *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Islamic World,* Oxford Islamic Studies Online, http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0212#e0212-s3 (accessed December 28, 2014).

[43] Jane F. Maynard, Leonard Hummel, and Mary C. Moschella (eds.), *Pastoral Bearings: Lived Religion and Pastoral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 13.

[44] J. N. Poling, "Sexuality: A Crisis for the Church," in P. D. Couture and R. J. Hunter (eds.), *Pastoral Care and Social Conflict* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 116.

[45] Graham, *ibid.*, 126.

ologies will allow articulating theology or blending theology into real life issues.

Conclusion

Developing practical theology in Islamic theological studies is essential because practical theology will add substantial strength to Islamic theological studies, as well as to other Islamic disciplines. This can be explained by the fact that practical theology addresses everyday faith and life (i.e., eating, blessings, etc.); otherwise, it "has little meaning at all."[46]

We argue that it is time to transcend the ivory towers of academic Islamic studies and give voice to the lived Islamic faith. Islamic theological studies can no longer be confined to a narrow and experience-free normative and dogmatic frame of academic discussions of Islam. We need to free Islamic practical theology from the metaphysical description and analysis of Islam and develop a more functional and practical discourse of Islam in order to offer meaning to those who use Islamic practical theology in their lived experiences, even in the midst of the 'secular.' This would be a theological commitment to the Sacred that gives priority to the lived faith and pays attention to the suffering of the people.

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[46] Miller-McLemore, "The Contributions of Practical Theology," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (London: Wiley/Blackwell, 2012), 7.

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